



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FORMER IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL SENTENCED FOR ILLEGALLY ACCESSING AN AGENCY COMPUTER SYSTEM

PHOENIX – Joe Tony Villa, 38, of Mesa, Ariz., was sentenced here today to one year of probation, and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine, for Unlawful Access of a Computer, by Federal Magistrate Judge Edward C. Voss.

In the course of his guilty plea on January 16, 2007, Villa admitted that on July 25, 2005, while employed by the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), at the Florence, Arizona, Service Processing Center, as a Data Security Administrator, he accessed an official government computer, and obtained information relating to the processing of immigration detainees from the ICE ENFORCE computer system. Specifically, he accessed the record of a previously deported alien in order to change the data to make it appear as if the detainee had been processed into the facility in April 2004. However, as Villa knew, he had previously released the detainee without authorization or processing, and was attempting to cover up his conduct. In the course of the sentencing, Villa acknowledged that his conduct “was a big mistake” and “not a day goes by that I don’t think about it.” The government noted that the integrity of DHS computerized immigration records is critical to the Department’s operations throughout the country and unauthorized manipulation of the records by any employee will not be tolerated.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. The prosecution is being handled by Frederick A. Battista, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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